United Nations A/ES-10/588–S/2013/260

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
3 May 2013

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-eighth year

Identical letters dated 2 May 2013 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I regret to inform you of the continuing turmoil and deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, due to illegal and provocative policies that continue to be pursued by Israel, the occupying Power. While serious regional and international efforts are under way to revive the path of peace and to salvage the two-State solution, Israel instead continues to choose colonization and confrontation. Even while paying lip service to the goal of peace, for not a single moment has the occupying Power ceased the oppressive and destructive measures that have for so long characterized its nearly 46-year military occupation.

As a result, the Palestinian people continue to suffer gross violations of their human rights, including through forced displacement and transfer of the civilian population, confiscation of their lands and properties, demolition of their homes, imprisonment and detention, and obstruction of their freedom of movement. In addition to Israel's perpetration of such crimes, its settlers continue their rampages throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, terrorizing Palestinian civilians, attacking homes, orchards and farms, and desecrating mosques and churches.

While all these issues were highlighted by the State of Palestine during its intervention to the Security Council on 24 April 2013, I am compelled to draw the international community's attention to several incidents during the recent period, which have raised tensions and concerns.

Hundreds of Palestinians have been forcibly displaced by the occupying Power, in addition to the hundreds more families whose homes and whose existence on the land is threatened by pending military orders. The largest of these recent displacements involved the eviction and forced transfer of 100 Palestinian Bedouin families from the village of Wadi al-Maleh in the northern Jordan Valley on

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29 April. The residents, as well as their animals, were completely evacuated and the affected area was declared by Israel to be a "closed military zone", which the occupying forces proceeded to use for military exercises that resulted in the scorching of hundreds of dunums of fields. That same day, Israel demolished four Palestinian homes in the Al-Tur neighbourhood in East Jerusalem, rendering homeless 24 members of the Gaith family, including five children and two gravely infirm persons.

Also on 29 April, Israeli occupying forces demolished a water well and facility in Al-Fawwar refugee camp in Al-Khalil, further targeting this vulnerable area. This was preceded by the destruction, on 26 April, of 22 Palestinian structures across the West Bank, forcibly displacing 28 Palestinians, including 18 children, and affecting another 120 people. Also on 24 April, the occupying forces demolished three Palestinian homes in Al-Arroub refugee camp and bulldozed several orchards. Demolition orders are also pending for part of a mosque in the Ras al-Amoud neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. In this regard, it is imperative to recall that, since 2008, more than 2,400 Palestinian homes and structures have been demolished in Occupied East Jerusalem and so-called "Area C" alone, displacing more than 4,400 people.

Further in this connection, Israel has persisted with its illegal settlement campaign, including through the construction and expansion of both settlements and the Wall that are fragmenting the contiguity of the State of Palestine and threatening the physical realization of the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. On 16 April, the Minister for Housing of Israel publicly declared that Israel will begin construction in the so-called "E1" area of Occupied East Jerusalem. This was followed by reports on 29 April that the Ministry for Housing had approved the construction of an additional 120 units in an illegal settlement ("Givat Zeev") in Occupied East Jerusalem. Today, another settlement outpost was illegally established by Israeli settlers near the Zatara checkpoint in the Nablus area. All such provocations are regrettable indications of Israel's insistence on entrenching its occupation, rather than of its interest in behaving in a manner that respects international law and acting to bring an end to the occupation that began in 1967.

The Bethlehem area also continues to be targeted by this insidious Israeli colonization campaign. Military orders have been issued for the seizure of tens of dunums of land belonging to Palestinians from the village of Nahhalin with the objective of connecting two nearby settlements. At the same time, construction of the Wall continues in total disregard of the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and numerous United Nations resolutions. Following the recent failure of a seven-year legal battle in Israeli court, planned construction of the Wall in the Cremisan Valley area near Bethelehm threatens a small community of elderly nuns, the Salesian Sisters, and their school and playground, which will be surrounded by the Wall and separated from 75 per cent of their land. In addition, at least 58 Palestinian families will lose access to their agricultural lands in the area.

These ongoing illegal practices have been accompanied by a wave of violence, terror and hate crimes by extremist Israeli settlers, who continue to target Palestinian civilians, particularly children. This has included: an attack by a group of 12 settlers on a 16-year-old Palestinian boy while he was walking to school in East Jerusalem (1 April); attacks on school buses in the Nablus area, injuring seven

children (1 April); an attack on a 25-year-old man near Al-Khalil and the running over of a 9-year-old boy near Bethlehem (15 April) and of a 60-year-old man in Al-Khalil (28 April); and, most recently, a raid on the village of Beit Furik near Nablus in which several residents were attacked and beaten (29 April), as well as the stabbing of a man by a group of settlers in East Jerusalem, an attack on a man in Bittin village near Ramallah and an attack on a school bus carrying girl students at the Huwwara checkpoint near Nablus, in which 20 people were injured (30 April).

In addition, the settlers continue to wreak havoc and destruction on Palestinian properties and land. Extremist settlers continue to vandalize homes, causing damage and sullying these homes with racist, hateful graffiti, and to torch olive groves and other farmlands. The most recent such incident occurred on 30 April, when revengeful settlers attacked Al-Ribat Mosque in Urif village near Nablus and yesterday, 1 May, when settlers ignited at least 57 fires throughout Palestine, destroying hundreds of olive, almond and other fruit trees and large areas of cultivated crops, destroying the livelihoods of yet more Palestinian families. Also, in this regard, on 27 April, Israeli settlers set fire to nine vehicles owned by the United Nations, as well as a Palestinian-owned car and three orchards in East Jerusalem.

Israel's illegal practices have continued to target the Gaza Strip, an integral part of the State of Palestine, which remains under an oppressive, unlawful blockade. On 29 April, Israel launched several military strikes against the Gaza Strip and, on 30 April, the occupying Power carried out yet another extrajudicial killing, when it targeted and killed Haitham Mishal, age 29, while he was riding a motorcycle in Gaza City. Palestinian fishermen's lives and livelihoods also continued to be targeted by Israeli fire off the coast of Gaza, affecting thousands of families. In addition, Israel has cancelled visits by Palestinian families from Gaza to their relatives in Israeli prisons.

All of these illegal Israeli policies and practices are fuelling tensions on the ground, inciting violence and provoking deeper mistrust. All of Israel's actions run contrary to international law and contrary to the efforts being made by the Palestinian leadership, along with their Arab partners, who have undertaken to revive the Arab Peace Initiative, and by the United States of America and all other concerned members of the international community to revive the path of peace and launch credible negotiations aimed at resolving all core issues, achieving a just, lasting, peaceful solution in accordance with the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and realizing freedom and justice for the Palestinian people.

It is high time for the international community, whose commitment to this solution has been repeatedly reaffirmed — most recently by the adoption of General Assembly resolution 67/19 of 29 November 2012 according to Palestine non-member Observer State status in the United Nations — to act consistently with its long-standing principled commitment and in accordance with relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. A clear demand must be made on Israel, the occupying Power, to cease its illegal actions and commit to the path of peace. The international community, foremost the Security Council, has clear responsibilities in this regard and must no longer tolerate the occupying Power's empty pretexts, ruses and disdain for international law and will and must act collectively to hold Israel accountable for its violations and crimes. Only by being serious about peace can the international community help to make it a reality.

The present letter is in follow-up to our previous 460 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 5 April 2013 (A/ES-10/587-S/2013/218) constitute a basic record of the crimes committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations